

HELIOTHIS PELTIGERA (D. & S.) THE BORDERED
STRAW (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE) AS AN OCCASIONAL
SCOTTISH IMMIGRANT

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The capture of a single example of the bordered straw moth, *Heliothis peltigera* (D. & S.), in a light trap set at Newmilns, Ayrshire (NGR: NS 5337) on the 14th July 1986, has prompted the examination of previous records in Scotland. They are here treated in date order, according to when they were captured.

The first reference appears to be that of Meyrick (1895) in which he refers to the occurrence of this species as far north as Ayrshire. This record is given more substance in the British Association Glasgow Handbook (Dalgish & Ord, 1901) as at Monkton, Ayrshire, no date given. It is credited to the naturalist J. P. Duncan who was active around the Clyde coast at this time although biographical details have proved elusive. He is probably the same Mr. Duncan of Troon who contributed to the Flora of Ayrshire (Smith, 1896). No specimens of his have been traced to-date in museum collections. This locality has been perpetuated by South (1909), as well as in later editions, under the name of Markton, Ayrshire. Such a place does not exist and is clearly an error in transcription for Monkton.

The second occurrence of *peltigera* in Scotland is on the Isle of Rhum. To precis Harrison (1945) it was found as a fully grown larva on wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) being cultivated by a shepherd in tin cans outside his cottage at Kilmory on 19th August 1945. Harrison had beaten this plant in anticipation of finding the homopteron associated with *Artemisia* spp., *Eupteryx abrotani* Douglas. What the shepherd thought of this behaviour is not recorded but this finding of *peltigera* has been requoted in the entomological press at frequent intervals. It appears in Dannreuther (1946, 1949a), Harrison (1955), Steel and Woodroffe (1961) and Wormell (1982, 1983). Harrison in his later assessment refers to the event as the plural "larvae". Dannreuther (1949a) in reviewing this species' status during the period 1945-8 mentions a total of over a hundred adults and hundreds of larvae for the year 1945. By contrast, in 1948 there were only three adults seen in the whole British Isles from Somerset, Torquay and Unst. This last locality is further specified as at Westing, on the west side of the island in Shetland, collected by Mrs. M. C. Sutherland (Dannreuther, 1949b).

In 1957 two *H. peltigera* were seen in Scotland, both of which are represented by specimens in museum collections. On 12th March 1957 Alan MacLaurin collected one at Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire, which specimen is now in Paisley Museum. This record

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does not appear to have been noticed in any published form. The second is in the Royal Museum of Scotland and is that cited by French (1958). It is from Gargunnoch, Stirlingshire and was found indoors on flowers by Miss W. Stirling on 19/20th March 1957. These two records show the penetration of an early spring migration into central Scotland but there is no evidence of successful breeding resulting from this particular influx as far north. Apart from the larva(e) found in 1945 only odd adults have been recorded. It seems exceptional for this species to develop a Scottish bred generation in the wild. That this is a rare event compared with the south of England is a not totally unexpected conclusion.

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